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RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Written statement submitted by the International Association of Educators for World Peace, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[11 March 1994]

1. Sindh, a land of peace and harmony, is the cradle of the world's oldest surviving civilization, i.e. the Indus civilization which is considered to be about 10,000 years old. Inhabited by 40 million peace-loving Sindhis, the descendants of the original inhabitants, the Dravidians, the subsequent settlers. Extending from the Indian Ocean, it covers an area of approximately 50,000 square miles straddling both sides of the present Indo-Pakistan border. Watered by the mighty Indus River, Sindh is rich with agriculture and natural resources, including oil, gas, coal, diamonds, gold and uranium.

2. With its immense richness, Sindh has always attracted invaders and refugees, including Aryans, Mongols, Greeks, Persians, Arabs, Portuguese, English and recently refugees from India. It is estimated that there are about 5 million refugees in Sindh today, including Afghans, Biharis, Burmese, Vietnamese, Chinese and others.

3. Sindh remained independent throughout its 10 thousand year history, in spite of various invasions, until it was conquered by the English in 1857 and thereafter merged with English colonial rule. In 1947, when the English decided to divest themselves of the former colonies giving them the option to join either India or Pakistan, the Sindhis, having no other option at the time, decided to join the new State of Pakistan under the Pakistan Resolution of 1940.

4. The Pakistan Resolution of 1940 states: "... areas in which Muslims are numerically in the majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign".

5. However, these promises of autonomy and sovereignty were never fulfilled by any Pakistani Government. This resulted in the discontent most clearly evidenced by the succession of Bangladesh. With a view to the continuity of Pakistan as a sovereign State, a reaffirmation at the core of its constituent parts will be needed. It is held that a new agreement must be entered into by the remaining parties in order to re-establish Pakistan's constitutional authority.

6. In the absence of any constitutional protection, Sindhis feel that:

(a) Sindh is being colonized through the construction of military cantonments which are being used for the arbitrary detention and torture of Sindhi nationalists;

(b) Sindhis are being reduced to a minority in their own homeland through the settlement of immigrants and outsiders;

(c) The Sindhi language, culture and history are being threatened by lack of education, closure of Sindhi schools and restrictions on traditional practices;

(d) The agrarian economy of Sindh is being destroyed by depriving it of the essential water from the Indus River as agreed in the Indus Water Treaty of 1954, sponsored by the World Bank;

(e) Sindhis are denied their land rights as the land has been allocated to the military generals from Punjab and Sindhis evicted from their centuries-old villages;

(f) Socio-economic rights of Sindhis are being violated as the natural resources of Sindh, including oil, gas, coal and minerals, are taken away without due compensation;

(g) The civil and political rights of Sindhis are being violated by a continuation of the military "Operation Blue Fox", which has resulted in the rape, torture, death in custody and summary execution of innocent Sindhis, as highlighted in a recent Amnesty International report of December 1993 (AI Index: ASA/33/05/93);

(h) Sindhis are denied freedom of movement and freedom of expression as highlighted by the continued detention without trial of His Excellency G.M. Syed (the 91-year-old "Father" of the modern Sindhi nation).

7. In view of the continuing violations of human rights in Sindh, an impartial United Nations fact-finding mission would be not only welcome but is considered essential by many in the international community. Its purpose would be to investigate and report on the human rights situation in Sindh and report back to the Commission on Human Rights.

8. Immediate measures must be taken to ensure that Sindh and the Sindhis continue to participate effectively in the progress and stability of the region. Anything less puts the world's oldest surviving civilization at risk of extinction.